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CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF TORTURE AND DETENTION

Note verbale dated 27 June 2001 from the Permanent Mission of Bahrain to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of the State of Bahrain to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and has the honour to request it to circulate as an official document of the forthcoming fifty-eighth session of the Commission on Human Rights the speech of His Highness Shaikh Hamad Bin Essa Al-Khalifa, Amir of the State of Bahrain, on the occasion of the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.*

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* Reproduced as received in the language of submission only.

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Annex

Speech by
His Highness Shaikh Hamad Bin Essa Al-Khalifa
Amir of the State of Bahrain
on the occasion of the
United Nations International Day
in Support of Victims of Torture

26 June 2001

Unofficial Translation

In the name of God the most gracious, the most merciful

On this day, the international community should remember and sympathise with every human being who has suffered violations or harm, anywhere in the world, whether as a result of demanding his rights, carrying out his duty, or defending his homeland, territory, values or principles.

It is a source of great pride in the State of Bahrain, established on justice, peace and tolerance, that the country has defended the principles of right and freedom. Today, it is embarking, through the concurrence of its leadership and people, upon a path aimed at ensuring the political and legal atmosphere necessary for the protection of human rights in various fields, within the principles of the Constitution and the National Action Charter. This Charter, overwhelmingly agreed upon by the people of Bahrain, clearly ensures the maintenance of rights and freedoms of all, in accordance with the noble Islamic message, constitutional guarantees, and recognised humanitarian values, and is based on the principle of the comprehensive pardon which we have adopted as a guarantee from us to the all sectors of Bahraini society.

It is with pleasure and happiness that we participate, along with the Bahraini Society for Human Rights and the Human Rights Committee at the Shura Council in celebrating the United Nations International Day for the Support of the Victims of Torture. In particular, it is a pleasure to discuss the important status accorded to human rights issues in our country, Bahrain, whose deep-rooted civilisation has, throughout its long history, embraced various thoughts and ideologies in a unique model, indeed its Kingdom was known for spiritual and intellectual tolerance and cultural heritage. Today, this is reflected by the

political and social transformations currently taking place in Bahrain in a healthy atmosphere of open and constructive dialogue covering all issues of concern to this country, which is so dear to all its people, foremost of which is the issue related to the human being himself, who is the wealth of the country and the pillar of its development and growth.

The celebration of the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture is considered a humane occasion worthy of the highest praise and appreciation. The State of Bahrain, as it participates in this international celebration, is fully aware of an unarguable fact, namely that ensuring the welfare of the human being and the enjoyment of his rights is the highest aim and ultimate goal of all the country's plans for development and progress in all the various fields.

Bahrain has confirmed the international nature of human rights and accorded them full respect, both nationally and internationally, since its independence, from which time all its laws have adopted the principles embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Domestically, the National Action Charter is further proof of our determination to ensure respect for human rights and to give all citizens a stake in the future of our country. It contains provisions designed to reinforce basic rights and freedoms, and to establish the administrative and legal structures necessary to give full effect to the principles underlying all human rights.

We are confident that private Bahraini organisations and societies will play a vital role in this process, and will help ensure that with the cooperation and assistance of all concerned we can realise the overriding aim of the Charter, namely, a better future for Bahrain and all its people.

Internationally, Bahrain has become party to a number of important human rights treaties and conventions, most significant of which are the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Convention Against Torture, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other instruments related to human rights. Bahrain has also stepped up its close and cooperative working relationship with the United Nations and other international human rights bodies to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights around the world.

Torture is a heinous crime outlawed by Bahraini law. It is denounced by the teachings of our religion, Islam, and renounced by our traditions and cultural heritage.

Today, as we celebrate this international occasion in this region of the world, we cannot but express our deep compassion with the suffering of the brotherly Palestinian people – whether man, woman, or child – striving to regain their inalienable rights in their homeland in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy. It is high time for all States and governments to respect these resolutions without double standards, in order to maintain this same international legitimacy in all regions of our modern world, guaranteeing equality and justice among all of its peoples, without discrimination. What is happening in the occupied Palestinian territories is a clear violation by Israel of the Convention Against Torture, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other legal instruments relevant to human rights, as well as the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

In conclusion, it is necessary to stress the unity and indivisibility of human rights. Civil and political rights are complemented by economic, social and cultural rights. From this cultural standpoint, the State of Bahrain joins all parts of the world to strengthen a noble human goal, whose essence and ultimate aim is the human being, through the promotion and protection of human rights in their entirety.

May God help us succeed.